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BRIEF OUTLINES
OF
CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

DESIGNED FOR SENIOR EPWORTH LEAGUES
AND ALL BIBLE STUDENTS.

BY THE

REV. E. H. DEWART, D.D.

MAR 8 1918

M. A. 16.

HOLDING FAST THE FAITHFUL WORD AS HE HATH BEEN TAUGHT,
THAT HE MAY BE ABLE BY SOUND DOCTRINE BOTH TO EXHORT
AND TO CONVINCE THE GAINSAYERS.—TITUS I. 9.

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A FEW PREFATORY WORDS.

It is very desirable that young Christians should not grow up without definite conceptions of the fundamental doctrines taught in the Holy Scriptures. Yet many otherwise intelligent Christians cannot state clearly what they believe, or the grounds of their faith. Those who have no definite beliefs respecting the Scriptures, the Christian Church and the ministry, or the doctrines concerning Christ and His salvation, are at a great disadvantage when they have occasion to discuss such questions with persons who have well-defined views on these subjects, whether these views be true or false. Those who drift into erroneous and heretical opinions generally do so because they have not an intelligent grasp of Scriptural truths, such as they need to oppose the plausible errors with which they are plied. Persons who have no settled opinion on a question are in danger of accepting the first plausible view of the subject that is cleverly presented to them.

The following brief statements of Scripture Doctrine were written for the New York *Christian Advocate* at the suggestion of the Editor, and are published in this form with his kind permission. I do not claim that this is an authoritative statement of Methodist doctrine, though I think it will be found in essential harmony with Wesleyan teaching. I was, however, more anxious to state simply and plainly what I believe the Scriptures to teach, in opposition to current doubtful dogmas, than to give formal Methodist definitions in every case. It is not possible for me to give credit to every theologian to whom I may be indebted. Brief as these expositions of doctrine are, I venture to believe that those who fully master and make them their own will be able to give a reason for the faith and hope which they cherish.

E. H. D.

TORONTO, December 4th. 1897.

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BRIEF OUTLINES OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE.

I.

IMPORTANCE OF RIGHT RELIGIOUS BELIEFS.

The term "theology" in its strict sense, means the doctrine of God; but it is commonly used to designate the whole science of religion and divine things. There is at the present time a wide-spread tendency to disparage creeds, doctrines, and religious beliefs. It is frequently intimated that if one's life is in the right it is not of much consequence what he believes. This is a serious mistake. In all the affairs of life the conduct of people is the outcome of their beliefs, except in the case of acts that are the result of thoughtless impulse. This is as true of our religious beliefs as of those relating to our ordinary business. It is freely admitted that theology is not religion. A nominal profession of faith, or mere mental assent to a creed, does not transform the character and life. But this is no reason for assuming that a living faith in the great truths of revelation concerning God's

character and man's condition, duty, and destiny is a vain or fruitless thing. Such a faith is intimately related to experience and character. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." It has been rightly said, "A man's religion takes its character from his theology." The belief of what is false is misleading, but right beliefs are the roots from which right conduct grows. Those who have wrong thoughts of God, and of themselves and their duty, cannot render Him acceptable obedience. The mightiest motives to works of righteousness are supplied by a believing acceptance of the doctrines of the Christian religion.

The service which God requires implies the belief of what He has revealed concerning Himself. If we do not believe in God's power and holiness, we cannot serve Him with reverence and godly fear. If we do not accept the Scripture teaching respecting our guilt as sinners, we will never seek forgiveness and salvation. If we do not believe in the infinite love and power of Christ to save to the uttermost, we will not come to Him for deliverance and life. If we do not believe what is revealed respecting the future life, we cannot live and act under the power of faith in the things that are unseen and eternal. Christianity is an historic religion, presenting great foundation facts and principles for our acceptance.

Men disparage only what they do not believe to be true. Those who disparage the value of doctrinal beliefs, and talk as if the theologians of the past accepted their theology without proper inquiry, will generally be found to have a creed of their own,

for which they want to make room by rejecting what others believe. The belief of every doctrine relating to our spiritual interests, must be of importance in its bearing on experience and character.

NOTE.

THE disparagement of doctrinal beliefs is generally indirect rather than direct, implied rather than expressed. Few will bluntly say, "It is no matter what we believe." But there is, both in sermons and in current religious literature, a good deal of indirect disparagement of creeds and doctrines. It is often not so much what is said as what is suggested, that is objectionable. When a preacher says: "The belief of doctrines will not save you; the main thing is to love, trust, and obey Christ," this is undeniably true. Yet this may be said in a way that seems to imply that one may love and trust Christ without believing any particular doctrines. But some answer to such questions as, Who is Christ? and Why should we love and trust Him? must precede an intelligent acceptance of Him as our Teacher and Saviour. The answers to these questions are doctrines. In some current religious teaching it appears to be assumed that a saving knowledge of Christ may be gained without the Scriptures. It should be remembered, however, as I have said above, that "Christianity is an historic religion," and only in the New Testament can we learn those facts respecting Christ's character, work, and teaching that show Him to be a Saviour worthy of our trust and love.

II.

THE SOURCES OF RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE.

The study of the sources of our knowledge of God and divine things is invested with special importance, because the subject is closely connected with the grounds of religious belief. Unless the sources of our knowledge be trustworthy, we cannot have a sure ground for our belief of what is received from them. For this cause we cannot accept either tradition or mysticism as sources of religious truth. They are not reliable. The sources from which we receive the knowledge of those truths which constitute the doctrines of Christian theology are: (1) Chiefly from the revelation which God has given in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, especially in the teaching, character and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. (2) In a less perfect degree, from the exercise of reason in the study of created things. Some theologians unduly magnify the light of nature as sufficient without any special revelation. Others deem the witness of nature to God too imperfect to be the basis of a system of natural theology. These are both extreme views.

That God manifests Himself in His works is clearly taught in the Bible. The Psalmist says: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth His handiwork" (Psalm xix. 1).

St. Paul says: "For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Rom. i. 20). These and other Scriptures teach that all men, whether they have the light of the Bible or not, are responsible to God. Therefore "the light of nature" is a rule of life, by which those who have not the clearer light shall be judged. The declaration of the apostle Peter, that "in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted of Him," must be understood as embracing those who are without the light of the Gospel.

One of the theories of Professor C. A. Briggs is that there are three sources of religious knowledge—the Bible, the Reason, and the Church. He takes Spurgeon, Martineau, and Newman as illustrations of men who each received his knowledge of God from a different one of these sources—Spurgeon from the Bible, Martineau from Reason, and Newman from the Church of Rome. But the Church is only the agency which makes known truths received from a source higher than itself. Reason is the faculty by which we apprehend the truths written in the works and Word of God. It cannot be a source of knowledge in the same sense as Revelation is. As a matter of fact, each of these men read the Bible, exercised his reason, and was familiar with the teaching of the Church of the past. They did not, therefore, receive their knowledge of God from different sources, as Dr. Briggs

incorrectly alleges. Newman had a knowledge of God from the Scriptures long before he went to the Church of Rome. What he added after, in the judgment of Protestants, was not truth, but error. As an effort to exalt some alleged sources of religious truth to the level of the Bible, Professor Briggs's illustration completely breaks down.

III.

THE TESTIMONY OF NATURE TO GOD.

At a time when the theory of materialistic evolution seeks to exclude the agency of an intelligent mind in nature, even a desire to exalt the Bible should not make us fail to duly recognize the evidence which the visible universe presents to the existence of a personal, intelligent Creator. This testimony is not different or contrary to the teaching of the Scriptures, but affords strong presumptive evidence for such a revelation. In natural theology the existence of God and the moral nature of man are the fundamental facts which claim attention.

The existence of our world and the system of which it is a part is a strong argument for the existence of an intelligent Creator. The universe must have had a beginning. If so, some sufficient cause outside the thing begun is necessary to account

for its origin. We instinctively ask : By whom were all things brought into existence ? How did life and mind originate ? No answers that do not recognize creative power and intelligence can be deemed satisfactory.

Facts relating to mind are as pertinent here as those that relate to the material world. Hence the general consent of mankind (with few exceptions) to the existence of an Unseen Power who is the cause of all things, is a fact of great weight in its bearing on this question. Whether this belief is the result of natural intuition, or arises from the consciousness of a Supreme Being and an instinct of worship in the human heart, or results from the exercise of reason regarding the order and purpose observed in nature, in any case our nature and reason would be false witnesses if there is no such Creator.

The manifold evidences of order and design which are seen in the universe are a powerful argument for the existence of a personal Creator. When we note the way in which one thing is adapted to another, and in which natural forces operate according to fixed laws, we see that the universe is one vast system of means and ends—all indicating intelligent purpose. Those who tell us that though the eye is the organ by which we see it was not designed for sight, and though the ear is the organ of hearing it was not made to hear, may deem this very scientific, but it is contrary to common-sense. If it requires intelligent thought to understand the order and adaptations of the natural world, it would be absurd

to assume that they all came into being without thought or purpose. The fact that God uses gradual evolution as a method in carrying out His purposes does not destroy the force of the argument from design. It is still true that "wherever we see purpose accomplished, especially by the combination and adaptation of means, we know that the purpose is not in the means, but in some mind that existed outside of and before them." Thus we are logically and irresistibly led to the conclusion that "He that built all things is God" (Heb. iii. 4).

IV.

HUMAN NEED OF A SUPERNATURAL REVELATION.

Though the material universe and man's moral nature reveal important truths respecting the Creator and the creature, it is a limited and imperfect knowledge which does not meet our human needs as intelligent moral beings. A belief in the existence of a great First Cause, whose dependent and responsible creatures we are, creates a strong presumption that God would not leave us without a supernatural revelation of His will. In the conscious need for fuller light we are impelled to ask: What is the

character of this great Being? What is His attitude and disposition toward us? What are the duties He requires of us? How shall we obtain deliverance from the feeling of conscious guilt? Does God hear and answer prayer? When we die, does death end all? To these questions of tremendous import the light of nature gives no distinct and adequate answer.

The revelation contained in the Scriptures fully answers all these questions. It supplies the knowledge of great truths relating to God and man, duty and destiny—a knowledge without which human life would be a dark and desolate existence. It sheds light upon the great problems of moral being. It makes known the love of our heavenly Father, the conduct and character which He requires, forgiveness for human guilt, strength for our moral weakness, and consolation for the sorrows and ills of life. Above all, it makes known Christ, the all-sufficient Saviour, who “hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.” Its precepts and promises cover all human wants, and proclaim a full and free salvation for all.

It is a characteristic of current rationalism that it unduly exalts the light of nature and places the religions of the heathen world on nearly as high a level as Christianity. This is frequently done in a way that makes the Scriptures appear less necessary than they have been held to be by the Christian Church in all ages. In many cases it seems as if the theologians of this school were using the knowledge for

which they are indebted to the Bible to disparage and undermine its authority. The best systems of heathenism are destitute of the knowledge of God's true character and attributes, of man's moral condition and needs, of a rule or standard of conduct, and especially of the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The fullest knowledge of these systems reveals nothing that lessens the necessity for the Christian revelation. Christian missionaries, who have had the best opportunities of knowing the true character of heathenism, bear the most emphatic testimony to the vast difference between the character and influence of the Christian religion and that of all heathen systems. The evidence on this point amply confirms the apostle's declaration, that "the world by wisdom knew not God."

NOTE.

One of the current ideas of the day is that "there are no false religions." It may be admitted that some truths are found in all religious systems. This does not, however, justify the statement that there are no false religions. Every system of religion that presents wrong conceptions of God's character and man's character, and of human duty and destiny, is a false religion. The Rev. John H. Barrows, D.D., who took the leading part in promoting the Chicago Parliament of Religions, and who, in the opinion of some, unduly exalted the heathen religions on that occasion, since his return from China and India has borne a most remarkable testimony to the insufficiency of the heathen religions and the world's need of Christianity. In an address, he says:

"The world needs the Christian religion. I have given five of the best years of my life to the examination of this question,

and I have had opportunities such as no other man ever had, of seeing and knowing the best side of the ethnic religions. I count as my friends Parsees and Hindus, Buddhists and Confucianists, Shintoists and Mohammedans. I know what they say about themselves. I have looked at their religions on the ideal side, as well as the practical, and I know this, that the very best which is in them, the very best which these well-meaning men have shown to us, is a reflex from Christianity, and that what they lack, and the lack is very serious, is what the Christian Gospel alone can impart; and I know that beneath the shining examples of the elect few in the non-Christian world there is a vast area of idolatry, and pollution, and unrest, and superstition, and cruelty, which can never be healed by the forces which are found in the non-Christian systems.

"Recognizing to the full the brighter side of so-called heathenism, rejoicing that the light has been shining everywhere, and that foreshadowings of the evangelic truths are discoverable among the nations, I yet see that in Christ only is there full salvation for the individual and for society. Many wise and true opinions are doubtless held by the disciples of the ethnic faiths, but opinions, however true, are not man's crying need. Jesus Christ is not only the truth, but He is also the way and the life. In Jesus the two ideas which found most universal acceptance in the Congress of the World's creeds—I mean human brotherhood and Divine fatherhood—have their proof and their explanation."—*Homiletic Review*, July, 1897.

V.

THE CREDENTIALS OF THE SACRED
SCRIPTURES.

The consideration that Scripture is both the source and the standard of Christian doctrine, gives a deep interest to the question, What are the grounds on which we believe that the Christian Scriptures are a special supernatural revelation from God, in distinction from that given in creation, conscience and history? The great strength of the evidence that the Scriptures are a divine revelation does not depend on any one line of argument, but consists in the cumulative force of different kinds of proof converging to sustain the same conclusion. I can only briefly name the chief of these evidences, without fully stating the arguments.

The lofty conception of God's character presented in the Bible distinguishes it from all other so-called sacred writings. The unity of the moral teaching, which runs like a golden thread through the different books of the Bible, evinces that the same Spirit inspired its writers. The pure and elevating character of its teaching, and the wonderful adaptation of the truths revealed to the mental and moral condition of the human race, show that they are from Him who knows what is in man—his nature and his needs. The great historic facts that are the records of these

divine revelations of God's will, have been fully attested and vindicated. Miraculous displays of divine power have ratified the commission of God's messengers and attested the authority of their message. The significant relation of the preparatory teaching and history of the Old Testament to the redemptive work of Christ, recorded in the New Testament, gives evidence of a divine purpose. The fulfilment of the predictions of prophecy relating to nations and to the character and work, the life and death of Jesus the Messiah indicates a supernatural knowledge of future events. The unique character and teaching of Christ and His testimony concerning Himself; the miracles of mercy that He wrought in proof of His claim to be the Son of God, especially the fundamental miracle of His resurrection, so fully attested; the moral transformations wrought in character by the sanctifying power of these revealed truths; the salutary influence of the Gospel on communities and nations; the verification of the promises of Scripture in the religious experience of all true believers; the character of the prophets and apostles, who were the witnesses of the facts recorded in these writings—all these, like converging streams of testimony, unite to form a mighty river of proof of the divine inspiration and authority of the Christian Scriptures, which should produce conviction in the minds of all unprejudiced seekers for truth.

We should bear in mind that different kinds of truth must be established by different kinds of evidence. "Physical truth must be established by

experiment, historical by testimony, spiritual by consciousness, reason and moral sense." Christianity is proved and vindicated by all the kinds of proof appropriate to the subject.

VI.

THE OLD TESTAMENT.

It is desirable that every Bible student should have a correct conception of the scope of the Old Testament and its relation to the New. The Old Testament consists mainly of the history of God's ancient people, the prophecies of prophets who preached righteousness and made known God's threatenings and promises regarding the future, and the Psalms which are largely an inspired record of religious experience.

In the Old Testament we learn that a nation was selected and trained to be a divine agency to make known to the world the knowledge of God and His glorious purpose of the redemption of humanity through Christ, and that there was a succession of prophets, who claimed to receive and utter divine messages. All through these ancient Scriptures run predictions of a coming Messiah. As time goes on, the utterances of the prophets on this subject become more definite. The hope of the coming Deliverer and

a great redemption broadens and brightens till it illumines the whole horizon of Hebrew thought and life. This development was the outcome of the revelations which God made from time to time to the prophets. The prophecies give a divine sanction to the New Testament dispensation, because they show it to be the result of God's purpose as foretold by the prophets.

Some disparage the moral teaching of the Old Testament as crude and low. There are, indeed, incidents recorded which indicate a lower moral standard than that of the New Testament. But the views of the people as to truth and duty were progressive. We should not judge Hebrew morals by exceptional cases like that of Jael and Sisera, but by the moral precepts and truths of "the law and the prophets." These present lofty ideas of God and human duty. The Ten Commandments are a high moral code. In the Old Testament we read, "A God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He" (Deut. xxxii. 4); "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him" (Psalm ciii. 13); "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah vi. 8). Every form of wrongdoing is unsparingly condemned in the Hebrew Scriptures. "The face of the Lord is against them that do evil" (Psalm xxxiv. 16).

We would not affirm that our Lord's citations authenticate and ratify every ~~one of these~~ books; but the explicit acceptance of the authority and

inspiration of the Old Testament by the Master and His inspired apostles vindicates its right to be included in the sacred Christian Scriptures. It is of the Old Testament that Christ said, "Search the Scriptures; . . . they are they which testify of Me" (John v. 39). It is of the Old Testament that St. Peter said, "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter i. 21). It is of these sacred writings that St. Paul said, "Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. xv. 3), and of which he wrote to Timothy, "And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. iii. 15). He adds, as the ground of this high estimate of these Scriptures, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. iii. 16).

VII.

THE NEW TESTAMENT.

The New Testament is not an imitation of the Old Testament. It takes no notice of the rise and fall of kings and nations. All its interest gathers around the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. It consists of a fourfold account of His public ministry, death and resurrection; a record of the chief events in the early days of the Christian Church; and letters

of religious instruction from apostles to several churches. St. Luke calls his gospel a treatise "concerning all that Jesus began both to do and to teach" (Acts i. 1). Of these books, five are historical, twenty-one are epistolary, and one is apocalyptic. Though these writings were originally addressed to the Christians of that time, we may say with St. Paul, "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Rom. xv. 4). No other Christian writings but those in the New Testament have been accepted by the Church as possessing canonical authority.

From these records we learn that Christianity is not an isolated, independent religion, unconnected with the historic past. It is largely built on Old Testament foundations. In the New Testament we see the fulfilment of the prophetic predictions regarding the Messiah. The Christian religion inherits and appropriates the doctrines and moral precepts of the earlier Scriptures. The connection between the new and the old dispensation is shown in the words, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son" (Heb. i. 1). In this later revelation there is no formal system of doctrines nor code of morals, but there are great truths to be believed and moral principles to govern the life. A broad flood of light is shed upon the gracious character of God, the way of salvation from sin, and the future life after death.

The New Testament writings may not at first have taken rank with "the law and the prophets," but the great truths they contain are not less a divine revelation, "given by inspiration of God" to the Church of all ages. In these Scriptures the work of revelation is generally ascribed to our Lord: that of inspiration to the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, "My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent Me." Of Him, John the Baptist said, "He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God." St. Paul says, "But I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. i. 11, 12). The Redeemer, when giving His apostles the promise of the Spirit of Truth, said, "He shall guide you into all the truth." It has been forcibly said: "This endowment bore upon every part of their apostolic work; and in that work none could compare in importance with the recording, for all after time, of the origin and doctrines of the Christian faith."*

*Professor Banks.

VIII.

THE INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES.

When it has been shown that the sacred writers are truthful and trustworthy, and that the Bible contains a revelation of truths above what human reason could discover, the Inspiration of Scripture follows as a consequence; because only by divine inspiration could this knowledge of spiritual truths and future events be acquired by the agents by whom it was made known. For this cause discussions of this subject generally deal with the mode and character of inspiration—with “the Influence of the Holy Spirit in the construction and perpetuation of the sacred writings”—rather than with the establishment of the fact of inspiration. I am disposed, however, to regard the supernatural communication of a revelation of truth to the minds of the sacred writers as the main thing implied by inspiration. The manner in which these revelations were made is a secondary matter, compared with the fact itself. The truth revealed is God’s thought, but the Holy Spirit wrought through the natural faculties and gifts of the writers. The distinction between the extraordinary operations of the Holy Spirit, which produced the Scriptures, and His ordinary operations in the minds of believers should not be forgotten nor denied.

There is no generally accepted definition of inspiration. Every Christian should examine the evidence

furnished by the Bible itself, and accept no theory that is not in accord with the testimony of the sacred writers regarding their message. The theory of verbal inspiration, if it means that all the words of Scripture were dictated by the Holy Spirit, is open to weighty objections. It is not affirmed in the Scriptures. It is inconsistent with the use made of historic documents, with the varying accounts of the same event, and with the prominence given to the human element as seen in the different styles of the sacred writers. The Rationalist theory, which regards the inspiration of our Scriptures as of the same kind as that of poets and gifted authors, only higher in degree, robs the Scriptures of their authority as a standard of truth and duty. It reduces the divine promises simply to the thoughts of good men, and contradicts the statements of prophets and apostles as to the way in which they received their revelations of truth.

We do not regard the Scripture records of current historic events as a divine revelation; but the Spirit of truth inspired those who wrote these accounts of God's providential dealings with men. The kind or degree of inspiration which was required by these historic writers must have been different from that of seers and prophets, who made known what only God could have revealed. But they received the degree of inspiration which the work to which they were called required. St. Luke intimates that his "having had a perfect understanding of all things from the very first" was a qualification for writing the gospel which bears his name. It is not merely

the inerrancy of the Scriptures which the skeptical critics now deny, but their truth and trustworthiness. So long as these are vindicated the divine inspiration of Scripture cannot be denied; for it is attested by the testimony of those through whom these revelations were given.

IX.

THE EXISTENCE OF A PERSONAL GOD.

The conception of God which men cherish mainly determines the character of their worship and religion. Their own character is commonly ascribed to the beings they worship. The gods of the heathen are frequently represented as guilty of the same vices as those who worship them.

“Gods hateful, changeful, passionate, unjust,
Whose attributes are rage, revenge, and lust.”

The chief forms of antagonism to belief in a living, personal God are Atheism, which denies His existence; Agnosticism, which denies that we can have any knowledge of Him; and Pantheism, that recognizes no God but the universe. Pantheism is essentially atheistic. If there is no object of worship and faith but the objects that make up the visible system of things, then there is no great Being such as the

Bible makes known and our human needs require. A good deal of prominence is given in current theology to the divine immanence. Rightly understood, the words represent a great and essential truth. But it is not always clear what those who use this expression mean by it. If it be meant that the Creator, who called all things into existence maintains them in being by His power—that He “sustains, and is the life of all that lives”—this is a scriptural doctrine. But if it be meant that, in some mystical sense, God is so present in all things as to make His supernatural interposition in the government of the world superfluous, this comes too dangerously close to Pantheism to be accepted by Christians. Any teaching about God that denies or ignores His personality, and is not in harmony with a belief in Him as a loving Father who hears our prayers and has compassion for our needs, is inconsistent with Christianity.

We have seen that the material universe bears cogent witness to the existence of an intelligent Creator, but that it is only from the sacred Scriptures we can obtain the knowledge of His character and perfections. Many theologians maintain that the idea of God is intuitive in the minds of all men. Though there are some objections to this view, it is significant that in the Bible the existence of God is nowhere announced as a new truth. The first words in the Bible, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” assume the fact of His existence and power. But in many places in the Old Testament the heathen, who worship various tribal

gods, are forcibly reminded that Jehovah is the One living and true God, the Creator of all things. All the prophets agree with Moses that "the Lord He is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else" (Deut. iv. 39). The numerous passages in which infinite power and wisdom are ascribed to Him amply disprove the notion of the "higher critics" that Jehovah was merely the tribal god of the Hebrews, until a comparatively late period.

The majesty of the divine character is grandly set forth in the Old Testament; but in the New Testament God's love is more gloriously manifested. One great purpose of the incarnation of Christ was more fully to reveal the Father. The Baptist said: "The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John i. 18).

X.

THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.

The Scripture statements respecting the character and perfections of God are fundamental truths of religion. But as there is little diversity of view among Christians on this subject, and as the space available will not permit much quotation of Scripture, this subject will be treated with great brevity. The attributes of God are those essential qualities of His nature which He has Himself revealed that we

might think and feel rightly concerning Him. All classifications of these attributes, such as natural and moral, absolute and relative, negative and positive, are more or less imperfect and open to objections. Yet there are some of these attributes which we naturally think of as characteristic of God's essential Deity, and others which appear to be especially manifested in His relations to us, and which may be communicated in some degree to beings made in His image.

The God of the Bible is a self-existent and eternal Spirit, the Creator and Ruler of the universe. "From everlasting to everlasting" He is the ever living source of life (Psalm xc. 2 ; John iv. 24).

God is omnipresent. His presence fills heaven and earth (Jer. xxiii. 24 ; Acts xvii. 28).

As the eternity of God expresses the mode of the divine existence in contrast with all temporal things, so His immensity expresses the mode of His existence in contrast with all limitations of space.

Omnipotence belongs to God alone. He said to Abraham, "I am the Almighty God." The works ascribed to Him imply infinite might. He can do everything that is a proper object of power (Matt. xix. 26 ; Jer. xxxii. 17). Virtue and holiness, however, are not legitimate products of power.

Omniscience or infinite knowledge, as Mr. Wesley says, "is a clear and necessary consequence of omnipresence. If He is present in every part of the universe, He cannot but know whatever is or is done there." He foresees the events of the future before

they come to pass (Heb. iv. 13 ; Acts xv. 18). There may be apparent difficulty in reconciling divine foreknowledge with human freedom ; but we know that both are facts, and that God's knowledge is not the cause of our acts.

The wisdom of God is closely related to His knowledge, though they are not identical. Wisdom is the right application of knowledge. The Bible frequently refers to the boundless divine wisdom seen in the counsels and works of God (Jer. x. 12 ; Rom. xi. 33).

Immutability is ascribed to God, in contrast with the changeableness of mortals and all temporal things (Psalm cii. 27 ; Heb. xiii. 8). The divine immutability is not, however, unchangeableness like that of the insensate rock, which continues the same because it has no power to put forth action. It is more nearly akin to the consistent steadfastness of a moral being of high character. It refers to the divine nature, not to divine acts. His immutability is not inconsistent with the acts of creation, redemption and retribution, which are ascribed to God in the Holy Scriptures.

XI.

THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.

(Continued.)

The study of what are generally called the moral attributes of God possesses special interest, because they are those qualities that are more specially manifested in His dealings with the children of men, in His relations of Father, Governor and Saviour.

Holiness is constantly ascribed to God in both the Old and New Testaments as His most distinguishing characteristic (Isa. vi. 3; 1 Peter i. 16). It is not in a strict sense an attribute, because as applied to the Divine Being it implies all moral perfections. A holy God must be just, good, merciful and true. Justice in God implies the administration of His moral government with truth and righteousness (Psalm cxlv. 17). It is evinced in the character of the divine precepts and in His dealings with His intelligent creatures. "The Lord is good to all, and His tender mercy is over all His works." Goodness, when ascribed to God, does not mean the opposite of badness, as when ascribed to human beings, but the benevolence and love from which flow all the blessings with which our heavenly Father supplies all our needs and delivers from the evils of our sinful state. God is merciful. Mercy is love in active

exercise toward the guilty and suffering, who need compassion, relief and forgiveness. The truth or faithfulness of God is an essential quality of His nature, arising from the immutability of His attributes. He says, "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed" (Mal. iii. 6). This affirms in different words the blessed truth, that "His mercy endureth forever."

It has been alleged that, because the infinite One is incomprehensible by mortals, we cannot know God. It is true we cannot "find out the Almighty unto perfection"; the being whom mortals could fully comprehend would not be God. But we can know a great deal about things that we do not fully comprehend. So, though we cannot comprehend the infinitude of God, we can know that His power, faithfulness and love are blessed realities. We can know "that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Heb. xi. 6). In proportion to our holiness and spiritual-mindedness we gain truer conceptions of God. It is sometimes said that the moral attributes we ascribe to the Creator are human qualities. This is not a weighty objection, even if it be true. Is there anything in the universe known to us whose qualities could be more fitly ascribed to God? If man was made in the divine image, should we not expect his nature to reflect the divine nature?

We must not regard these Scripture verities about God as abstract truths which do not practically concern us. They are the foundations of all true Christian faith. To rightly apprehend the great fact that

there is a living gracious God such as the Bible proclaims, is enough to make life a wholly different thing. These sublime perfections of God's character rebuke our distrustful unbelief, and gloriously vindicate His claims to the unfaltering faith and loving obedience of His intelligent creatures.

XII.

THE TRINITY IN UNITY.

The unity of the divine essence is emphatically set forth in the Holy Scriptures; but they teach that in that unity there are mysterious personal distinctions, and that we are to adore the one living and true God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It may be admitted that no definition or exposition can adequately and unobjectionably express this doctrine; but the great truth which the term represents is clearly taught in the Bible, and has been firmly held, with few exceptions, by the Christian Church in every age and country. Though in the Old Testament dispensation the doctrine of the Trinity was not fully revealed, yet there are references to a plurality of persons in the Deity which indicate that it was in some degree apprehended in the Jewish Church. The character and work of the Messiah, as foretold by the prophets, point to a Being possessing divine attributes and fulfilling the will of Jehovah. In Isa. xlviii. 16, we

read: "From the time that it was, there am I: and now the Lord God, and His Spirit hath sent me."

In the New Testament the Son and the Holy Spirit, as well as the Father, are frequently spoken of as divine personalities, to each of whom are ascribed the names, attributes and works of God. When commissioning His apostles, Christ said: "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. xxviii. 19). The benediction of St. Paul—"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all" (2 Cor. xiii. 14)—bears witness to the same central truth. In these utterances there is no indication of any difference of nature, dignity, power or glory between the persons. The ascription of the names, character and works of God to Father, Son and Holy Spirit can only be reconciled by the doctrine of the Trinity, which implies unity of essence with difference of office and relations.

There is no real force in the objection that this doctrine is incomprehensible to reason, and irreconcilable with human arithmetic or the voluntary humiliation of our Redeemer. The nature and acts of the infinite and eternal One transcend all human thought. We must not regard the doctrine of the Trinity as a speculative dogma that has little practical influence on character and life. As Bishop Huntingdon has shown, "the Trinity of God appears to be a necessary means of manifesting and supporting in the mind of our race a faith in the true personality of God." It

is "the necessary ground-work of the whole Scripture doctrine of the atonement for sin, or the reconciliation between God and man." Nothing but Christian teaching that has been based on this fundamental truth of our religion has been the power of God unto the salvation of sinful men. But in setting forth this doctrine we must guard, on the one hand, against what would be tritheism; and, on the other, against the Sabellian theory, which implies that there is but one person in the Godhead, with different manifestations.

XIII.

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

What do the Holy Scriptures teach concerning the character and work, the life and death of our Lord Jesus Christ? He has become more and more the centre around which modern religious thought surges. The answer anyone gives to the question, "What think ye of Christ?" will show his own position and belief. What then should we believe about Christ? His life did not begin with His earthly birth, "whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting." "The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." He said: "Before Abraham's day I was." He was incarnated into our human nature that He might redeem and

save them that were lost. He was the Messiah predicted by the prophets, whose life and death fulfilled what they foretold. Divine titles and attributes are ascribed to Him. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." He is declared to be "God manifest in the flesh," "God over all, blessed forever." All created beings are subject to change, but "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day and forever," immutable and eternal. In the Son of God the divine and human are mysteriously united in one person.

The works which belong to God alone are ascribed to Him. "All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made." Judgment and forgiveness of sin are also His work. He was an infallible Teacher, whose words were spirit and life. "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell." The miracles of mercy He performed during His earthly ministry manifested divine power and love. By His sacrificial death He made an atonement for the sins of the whole world, and "became the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him." He rose from the dead on the third day, and ascended into heaven. "Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." He will come again at the last day to judge the quick and the dead, and render unto every man according to his works. The most remarkable and significant of all New Testament statements about Christ are the claims He puts

forth and the testimony He bears respecting Himself. It would be blasphemy to apply them to the highest created being. He declares that He is the object of saving faith, the Way, the Truth and the Life, the Light of the world, the Resurrection and the Life, and that he that hath seen Him hath seen the Father.

The conception and testimony of the inspired apostles, who worshipped Him as "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords," are in perfect harmony with Christ's testimony respecting Himself.

It is hard to see how any Christian who has accepted and believed the truths respecting the character, work and offices of Christ, to which we have briefly referred, can be said to have "rediscovered" Him by modern study. The truth that we have as our Mediator the risen and living Christ does not supersede the "more sure word of prophecy, whereunto we do well that we take heed." Any teaching respecting the Son of God which regards Him simply as a good man of superior gifts and graces, or that advocates a theory of "kenosis," or self-emptying, which represents Him as a fallible teacher of imperfect knowledge, who accepts prevalent Jewish misconceptions, must be rejected as contrary to Christ's own words, and to the conception of His divine character set forth in the New Testament.

XIV.

THE ATONEMENT.

The great truth "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures," and that "we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins," has been held by the Church in all ages; but as to the way in which the Atonement avails for us and in what it consists there has been diversity of opinion. As late as the beginning of the twelfth century, Anselm deemed it necessary to combat the theory that the Atonement was a ransom paid to the devil. Even now there is no definition of the Atonement universally accepted. But saving faith in Christ is not the acceptance of any theory of the Atonement. Thousands have grasped the inspiring truth, that the atoning work of Christ manifests God's great love and gracious purpose to forgive and save sinners, without holding any special philosophy of the Atonement.

Though we may not be able fully to fathom the great mystery of redemption, it is reasonable to believe that there would be a perceptible fitness in the divine means of providing for the salvation of men. Every theory that regards the death of Christ simply as an example of self-sacrifice neither satisfies our reason nor accords with the Scripture statements respecting the redemption accomplished by His sacri-

ficial death. Though in an important sense, Christ died in our stead, the theory that He was literally a substitute, obeying the law and suffering its penalty for all whom He died, implies the unconditional salvation of all for whom such an atonement was made. It leaves no place for forgiveness. Those for whom Christ thus bore the penalty and obeyed the law can need no forgiveness. This theory represents the Son as the object of the Father's wrath, when He was perfectly fulfilling His will. God sees all things as they are. There is no make-believe with Him. Guilt is not transferable. Suffering endured by the innocent is not properly penalty.

Some theologians hold that the incarnation is the central fact in the history of redemption. But the death of Christ is constantly and explicitly declared by our Lord and the apostles to be the procuring cause of redemption and the ground of salvation. It is significant that it was Christ's sacrificial death that the Lord's Supper was instituted to commemorate.

It helps us to gain a right conception of what the Atonement accomplished to consider what was required by God's character and man's need. God is a righteous moral Governor. Man is guilty and needs forgiveness, at enmity with God and needs to be reconciled to Him. The death of the Redeemer was an atoning sacrifice, satisfying the claims of God's righteous law and government, and rendering it consistent with these for Him to accept and justify all who penitently believe on Jesus. It was also a glorious manifestation of divine love, adapted to subdue sinful

hearts into the penitent submission which makes the sinner willing to come to Christ for salvation. The key to the Atonement is found in the words of the apostle, "That God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." It does not unconditionally save any. But in its very nature it makes provision for the salvation of all who will accept the saving mercy offered on the conditions of the Gospel.

XV.

THE UNIVERSALITY OF THE ATONEMENT.

Those who hold that the Atonement secures the salvation of all for whom it is made, limit its saving benefits to an elect number chosen of God from all eternity. For all for whom such an Atonement is made shall certainly be saved, and as this is the divine method of salvation, none but those embraced in the atoning purpose can be saved. Calvinistic election intrenches itself in this view of the nature of the Atonement. But our Methodist Arminian belief, that Christ died for all, can only be in harmony with the doctrine of the Atonement which regards it as in its very nature made for the whole human race. Preachers and teachers who hold our Methodist theology of universal redemption, should guard against the use of language which assumes such a literal

substitution in obedience and suffering as logically implies a limited atonement.

Apart from the direct statements of Scripture, there is strong ground to expect that the divine scheme of redemption would embrace all mankind. All are sinners and need salvation. All are children of the same Father, and have the same claim to His mercy and grace. All that we learn of the character of God in the Bible leads us to believe that He would be gracious to all without respect to persons. If God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, if He so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son for its redemption, if He would have all men to be saved, is it consistent with all this that the saving benefits of the Atonement should be provided only for a part of the race? The fact that the Gospel is to be preached to every creature must imply that the salvation it offers is provided for all, unless we throw doubt on the sincerity of God. All those passages which show that the provisions of redemption are as extensive as the reign of sin, and all those which declare men to be responsible for not accepting Christ and His salvation, are irreconcilable with a limited atonement.

The universality of the Atonement is clearly affirmed in numerous passages of Scripture. He "gave Himself a ransom for all" (1 Tim. 2. 5). He "by the grace of God tasted death for every man" (Heb. 2. 9). "He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2. 2). The expression of St. Peter, "denying

the Lord that bought them," implies that atonement was made for those who are lost. It is evident the dogma of a limited atonement was rendered necessary to harmonize with that of predestination and election. Passages of Scripture which speak in a way that seems to countenance a limited atonement must be interpreted in harmony with the general tenor of Scripture teaching. It is indeed sometimes said, as if to escape the difficulties of this theory, that Christ died for the elect so as to secure their salvation, but that He died for others in such a way that they have no excuse for rejecting the offered salvation. But we are led to ask, "Are there two ways of salvation and two classes of the saved? Are the second class effectually called?" If grace essential to salvation is withheld from any class, such persons cannot be responsible for their failure to be saved.

XVI.

CHARACTER AND WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

The personality, Deity, and work of the Holy Spirit claim our attention, because these have been subjects of protracted theological controversy. Without any formal arrangement of the arguments, I will briefly refer to the evidence of the Scriptures on these points. Against the theory that the Spirit is

only an impersonal divine influence stand all those passages of Scripture in which He is spoken of as a person performing distinct personal acts. "The communion of the Holy Ghost" (2 Cor. xiii. 14) clearly implies personal agency. In our Lord's last discourses of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, He says: "He shall teach you all things;" "He shall bear witness of Me;" "He shall glorify Me;" and "He shall guide you into all the truth." The Holy Spirit is represented as being grieved, being resisted, suffering blasphemy, bestowing spiritual gifts, witnessing to the adoption of believers, searching and knowing all things, and performing other distinctly personal acts, utterly at variance with all impersonal theories.

As was shown in our article on the Trinity, the evidence for the Deity of the Holy Spirit is similar to that which proves the divinity of our Lord. The works and titles of God are ascribed to Him. He knows all things (1 Cor. ii. 10) He is called God (Acts v. 3, 4). He is Creator (Gen. i. 2; Job xxvi. 13). He inspired the prophets (1 Peter i. 11; 2 Peter i. 21). He is the source of miraculous power (Rom. xv. 19).

But the Holy Spirit is the special agent in making the benefits of redemption the actual experience of believers. As Mr. Wesley says: "The Holy Spirit is the immediate minister of God's will upon earth, and transacts all the great affairs of the Church of Christ." Regeneration is His work. The regenerate are said to be "born of the Spirit" (John iii. 6). He is the Sanctifier of the saints (2 Thess. ii. 13.)

Wesley says: "He is the great fountain of holiness to His Church; the Spirit from whence flows all the grace and virtue by which the stains of guilt are cleansed, and we are renewed in all holy dispositions, and again bear the image of our Creator." In vindicating His divine personality Dr. Miley says: "Giving efficiency to the ministry of the Gospel, applying the truth with convincing power to the conscience of men, renewing depraved souls in true holiness after the image of God, sustaining the life of the Church through a quickening influence in the mind and heart of believers individually—these are works which God only can perform."

There are two dangers against which Christians should guard: 1, As the Holy Spirit is the source and promoter of spiritual life, we should not fail to duly recognize and honor Him as an object of faith and worship. 2. On the other hand, we should not, under the pretext of honoring the Spirit, ascribe to Him operations inconsistent with the free moral nature which God has given us, or that would supersede or disparage the divine revelation of truth which the Spirit of truth Himself has given to make known to us the way of salvation.

XVII.

THE STATE OF MAN BY NATURE.

Our views of the state of man by nature will largely determine our views of all the doctrines relating to sin and salvation. In the Book of Ecclesiastes we read: "God made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions." The Scriptures inform us that God made man in His own image. This implies not merely that he was made in the likeness of the Creator as an intellectual and spiritual being, but also that he was endowed with a moral nature conformed in righteousness and holiness to the divine. That regeneration is regarded in the Scriptures as a restoration of the effaced divine image confirms this truth; yet even in his fallen condition man retains in his moral and spiritual constitution characteristics of the divine nature, without which his moral restoration would be impossible. Though it cannot be maintained that man's primitive state was ethically meritorious or rewardable, the tendency of his nature was in harmony with his moral relations and duties, with a spontaneous disposition to the good.

The teaching of the New Testament, as interpreted by all the evangelical churches, is to the effect that the fall of our first parents into sin subjected them to spiritual and temporal death, and that their

posterity come into the world inheriting the depravity of their nature. This depravity of human nature, or original sin, as it has been called, consists in sinful tendencies and dispositions arising from a disordered and corrupt state of the moral nature. "The race is fallen and morally corrupt through the sin and fall of its progenitors." This doctrine, so fully set forth in the Holy Scriptures, is amply confirmed by the sad facts of human history in every age and in all parts of the world. All human wickedness is the outcome and proof of human depravity.

The doctrine of depravity needs to be guarded on one or two points. The term "total depravity" should not be used to signify that all men are as utterly depraved as they would have been without redemptive grace. The benefits of redemption were coeval with the fall of man. There are degrees in depravity, as there are in holiness. We should also guard against admitting the theory that all men are accounted guilty of Adam's sin and punished for it. It is true we inherit consequences of Adam's transgression, but personal guilt is not transferable from the wrongdoer to any other. Rightly understood the doctrine of human depravity is vital and fundamental. As Dr. Miley pertinently says, "If our present state is the same as our primitive state, if there is no moral lapse of the race, and no common native depravity, there can be no need of a redemptive mediation in Christ, nor of regeneration through the Holy Spirit."

XVIII.

CONDITIONS AND MEANS OF SALVATION.

Though all are depraved by nature, and guilty transgressors of the divine law, we cannot accept the Calvinistic conception of depravity, which assumes that before regeneration we have no moral power to do anything conducive to salvation or in harmony with the will of God. If there is no moral ability, there can be no responsibility, and sinners are not blameworthy for living in sin. It does not meet the case to say that we can do nothing of ourselves. There is no scriptural ground to assume that men are left without any gracious "manifestation of the Spirit." Prevenient grace is given to all, "preceding and preparing for the fuller manifestation of grace and pardon and the new life" in those who yield to these gracious influences. The first motion of the soul toward God is put forth in the exercise of the gracious ability which God Himself bestows. It does not follow because the will is enfeebled by sin that the power of moral choice, which is essential to responsibility, is destroyed. This gracious ability does not contravene the great truth that salvation is the free gift of God.

To such beings, guilty and depraved, yet possessing by divine grace a moral power of choice, the Gospel offers of forgiveness and renewal, and the drawings

of the Holy Spirit are given, which when received and followed up become the means of salvation from the guilt and power of sin. The appeals of the Bible to all sinners to turn from their evil ways, and the conditions on which the blessings of salvation are offered, amply vindicate the Arminian view of man's state by nature, and his ability and obligation to repent and believe "Repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" are the scriptural conditions on the human side. Repentance, which implies a conviction of sin, sincere sorrow for past sins, and full purpose to forsake all evil ways and accept Christ as Saviour and Master, is a preliminary condition of salvation (Isa. lv. 7; Acts iii. 19). There can be no exercise of a saving trust in Christ as a Saviour till we penitently feel our guilt and need of salvation.

In a still more emphatic sense faith in Christ is set forth in the New Testament as the essential condition of a personal experience of saving grace. The vital element in saving faith is trustful reliance on the Lord Jesus Christ. Of course, this faith presupposes knowledge and intellectual belief of the truth respecting man's guilt and God's mercy in Christ. Such a belief produces the feeling of conscious guilt; but one might have this intellectual faith all his life, yet without a confiding trust in the love and power of Christ, our atoning Sacrifice and Mediator, he would never know the joy of forgiveness, the peace of God in the heart. Repentance and faith are acts of the whole man, put forth in the exercise of thought and

feeling. They are, therefore, rightly regarded as human conditions, because it is man, and not God, who repents and believes. Our heavenly Father would not demand these duties from His creatures without the bestowment of the power to render what He requires of them.

XIX.

JUSTIFICATION AND REGENERATION.

Justification, Regeneration and Sanctification, and their fruits, are the distinguishing blessings of a saved state. They signify different phases of Christian experience, which are the privilege of all who are truly converted. They are concomitants of scriptural conversion. The first two are then completed, and sanctification begun. Speaking of justification and regeneration, Mr. Wesley says: "The former relates to the great work which God does for us in forgiving our sins; the latter, to the great work which God does in us in renewing our fallen nature. In order of time, neither of these is before the other; in the moment we are justified by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in Jesus, we are also 'born of the Spirit;' but in order of thinking, as it is termed, justification precedes the new birth." The vital fact in justification by faith is forgiveness of

past sins through Christ. It is the opposite of condemnation. It is the bestowment of pardon in harmony with God's righteous government, because of the Atonement of Christ. The justification of a sinner by faith is not the justification of his character before men, or the bestowment of personal righteousness. Neither is it the imputation of Christ's righteousness to him as if it were his own. It is the remission of the penalty due to his past sins, God dealing with him and accounting him as righteous, and admitting him to the privileges and rewards of righteousness. We have seen in a previous section that penitent faith in Christ our Redeemer is the special human condition of a sinner's acceptance with God.

Regeneration, or the new birth, is the beginning of the new spiritual life. Mr. Wesley says: "It is that great change which God works in the soul when He brings it into life, when He raises it from the death of sin to the life of righteousness." Regeneration is as instantaneous as justification. The process of thought which precedes regeneration may be gradual, and the spiritual growth which follows may be gradual, but there must be some point of time when the sinner ceases to be a child of wrath and becomes a child of God. Mr. Wesley declares that it is wrong to speak of the new birth "as a progressive work carried on in the soul by slow degrees from the time of our first turning to God. This is undeniably true of sanctification; but of regeneration, the new birth, it is not true." It need hardly be said that there is no scriptural authority for regarding baptism as the

means of regeneration. To do so is putting the outward sign for the thing signified. This is a dangerous error, inasmuch as those who accept such a belief may rest in this delusion without the renewing of the Holy Spirit, which is the true new birth. As justification and regeneration are inseparable, it is evident that faith as a condition stands in the same relation to both. The term "conversion" is frequently used to designate the whole change in character and experience, when a sinner passes from the slavery of sin into the freedom of Christ. The chief fruits of this change are peace of conscience, adoption into God's family, power over sin, and "grace whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear."

XX.

THE WITNESS OF ADOPTION.

It is surprising that any Christian, familiar with the teaching of the Bible bearing on this point, should deny that it is the privilege of all true believers to know that their sins are forgiven, and that they are "the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Though some sincere Christians, because of the weakness of their faith, may have doubts of their acceptance, it is evident from the Old Testament, as well as from the New, that what some divines call "the

assurance of faith" is not the rare attainment of a few saintly souls, but the common privilege of all who are born of God. The nature of this great change and the terms used to designate it in the Scriptures fully attest this. It is a change from darkness to light, from death to life, from slavery to liberty, from guilty fear to peace and joy, from instability to steadfastness—a change of aims, duties and hopes constituting a new life. It is unreasonable to suppose that the being who is the subject of such a change could be unconscious of it. This evidence is what Mr. Wesley calls "the witness of our own spirit." St. Paul calls this assurance of experience "the testimony of our conscience." The explicit and abundant testimony of God's saints in both the Old and New Testament amply proves that they possessed the assurance of God's favor and the joy of His salvation. Similar testimony has been borne by the people of God in all ages.

Mr. Wesley and all Methodist theologians hold that, in addition to this evidence of consciousness, the Holy Spirit reveals to the spirit of the justified the assurance of adoption or sonship. As adoption is not something done in us, but an act of God changing our relation to Himself, and as it is the office of the Spirit to reveal "the deep things of God," this would lead us to expect that the Spirit would be the agent who would make known to the believer the fact of his adoption into God's family. This is clearly taught by St. Paul: "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying,

Abba, Father" (Gal. iv. 6); "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Rom. viii. 16). Some maintain that because God is our Creator all are His children, only that they do not realize their relationship. In one sense this is true; but the impenitent are called "children of wrath." "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name" (John i. 12). It is to this becoming sons of God that the Spirit bears witness. Mr. Wesley defines this testimony as "an inward impression on the soul, whereby the Spirit of God directly witnesses to my spirit that I am a child of God; that Jesus Christ hath loved me and given Himself for me; and that all my sins are blotted out, and I, even I, am reconciled to God." This seems to embrace more than St. Paul affirmed of the witness of the Spirit, though not more than is included in the experience of God's children. One class of religious teachers say that the believer knows he is a child of God because the Bible tells him so. But as the Scriptures do not tell any individual that he is saved, this statement can only mean that such a one concludes he has fulfilled the Scripture conditions of salvation, and, therefore, that he is saved. This makes the sinner's judgment of his own faith the ground of his confidence. A mental assent to the truths of the Christian religion is not justifying faith, nor the ground of assurance of being saved.

XXI.

THE SANCTIFICATION OF BELIEVERS.

Whatever diversity of opinion exists among Methodist theologians on secondary points, there is essential agreement on the doctrine that it is the duty and privilege of Christians to be holy in heart and life—to be fully consecrated to God and love Him supremely. To make sinful men holy is the great purpose of Christ's redemptive work. He "gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a people for His own possession, zealous of good works" (Titus ii. 14). "Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. vii. 1). The personal testimony of a great cloud of witnesses as to their experience of sanctification, practically vindicates the truth of the Scripture statements respecting the privilege of believers.

The prevalent belief among Methodists is that, although sanctification is begun in regeneration, it does not bring the inner spiritual life to completeness, but leaves room and need for further sanctification to perfect the work begun in regeneration. The weak point in the theory of those who oppose the view that regards sanctification as a special after experience is, that they generally assume regeneration to be so

complete as to preclude the need for any such after-work. But though there is no direct Scripture statement declaring the need of sanctification because of the incompleteness of regeneration, yet both Scripture and Christian experience show that there is such incompleteness.

We are not, however, warranted in maintaining that the Scriptures teach a specific experience of sanctification as definitely as they teach the experience of the new birth.

Is sanctification gradual or instantaneous? Many who ask this question do not discriminate between sanctification and entire sanctification. There can be no doubt that sanctification is a gradual work. Christians are to "grow in grace" and to "go on to perfection." But in the case of all who are fully sanctified, and possess the perfect love that casts out fear, there must have been some point of time when they passed into this higher experience of full salvation. Whether Christian perfection and entire sanctification be regarded as the same or not, this higher experience does not imply freedom from liability to sin, or such completeness as to render further growth in holiness unnecessary or impossible. As holiness is not a mere negative thing, but the positive graces of the Holy Spirit embodied in character, these graces never reach a stage when they cannot grow and increase. Mr. Wesley held that there is a direct witness of the Spirit to sanctification; but Professor Banks, of the Wesleyan Church in England, thinks neither the reasons he gives nor his quotations in support from

Scripture are quite convincing. Some who hold that entire sanctification is an essential condition of admission to heaven, maintain that this work is wrought in the soul at death. There seems to be no good ground for this belief. It is open to the objection, that if at death God unconditionally works in the soul a change essential to salvation, why might we not expect Him to work a similar change, during life, without the sinner's repentance or faith? Besides, this assumption of sanctification at death has no foundation in the Scriptures.

XXII.

PERSEVERANCE IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

There is abundant testimony in the Holy Scriptures to the sufficiency of divine grace to uphold and keep all true believers unto eternal life. It is not the will of our heavenly Father that any of His children should perish. Through Christ every believer can receive grace to help in time of need. But although believers are "joint heirs with Christ," they are still in a state of probation, in which they are to "work out their own salvation with fear and trembling."

The doctrine that the eternal salvation of all true believers is so certain that they cannot fall away and be lost, is contrary to the plain teaching of the Bible. It is rendered necessary by the acceptance of the

Calvinistic theory of predestination. If the Atonement secures the salvation of all for whom it is made, "effectual calling" and "final perseverance" become necessary links in the theological chain.

It does not relieve the difficulty to say that God ordains the means as well as the end; for this makes the conditions unconditional. This doctrine is based upon an erroneous psychology. It does not fairly recognize the power of alternative choice, which is essential to human responsibility. Religion does not destroy man's freedom of choice. The believer is as much a free and responsible agent after he is converted as he was in choosing Christ at first. He stands by a living faith, not by virtue of any past act of faith. Though God our Saviour "would have all men to be saved," yet many are lost because they choose the way of death. We can only refer to a few passages bearing on the subject. Our Lord says: "If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love" (John xv. 10). "If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered" (John xv. 6). The words of the risen Lord to the angel of Smyrna are: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. ii. 10). There are some "who draw back into perdition" (Heb. x. 39). St. Paul says: "But I keep under my body and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others I myself should be a cast-away" (1 Cor. ix. 27).

Those who quote as a proof of the certain final salvation of all who believe, the words of the Baptist

(John iii. 36), "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life," should read this saying in the light of the Master's words: "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed" (John viii. 31). Passages of Scripture which appear to give an assurance of the believer's ultimate unconditional salvation must be interpreted in harmony with man's mental constitution, with God's mode of dealing with him as a free being, and with all those Scriptures which plainly teach that we have a power to choose right or wrong for which we are accountable to God.

XXIII.

CHRISTIAN MORALS.

Irreligious people frequently allege that religion consists in the belief of doctrines and pious feelings which leave the practical duties of life neglected. This is an erroneous misconception. The belief of the truth and the experience of saving grace are divinely ordained means of producing right character and conduct, and of "teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus ii. 12). We have seen that true beliefs concerning God are closely related to a right observance of

our duty toward Him. So the belief of the truths of religion promotes the discharge of the duties we owe to our fellowmen in all the relations of our complex life. Charity, justice, benevolence and purity are essentially Christian duties. As Dr. W. B. Pope says: "Upon all these Christianity pours a clear and steady and sufficient light." St. Paul's enumeration of the fruits of the Spirit shows that it is the object of religion to impart those graces of character which alone can enable us to "do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with our God." It has been truly said: "Every doctrine has its ethical side."

Though not a complete moral code, the Ten Commandments are a condensed statement of human duty, especially when they are applied in the broad spiritual sense in which our Lord interprets them. But the moral precepts which abound in the Holy Scriptures are all laws of life which are binding upon the Christian conscience. Though the New Testament presents no code of detailed duties, it is full of warnings against specific forms of wrongdoing, and earnestly enjoins numerous practical duties. The Master Himself likens him who heareth His sayings and doeth them to a wise man who built his house upon a rock. He said to His disciples: "If ye love Me, keep My commandments" (John xiv. 15).

Some religious people teach as doctrine that Christ obeyed the law for believers, and as they are under the law of love they are delivered from the obligation to obey the divine law, and shall not be judged by it. But if Christ's perfect obedience is accounted the

believer's, he can have no sins to be forgiven. The Christian obeying the law from love and not from fear does not abrogate or supersede the divine precepts, no more than the use of steam power on a railroad renders the railway track unnecessary. The fact that believers are not justified by their good works does not cancel their obligations to render loving obedience to the divine requirements, or prove that such obedience is not pleasing and acceptable to God. The doctrine that the believer is not condemned by the law, if he transgresses it, is not scriptural. St. John says: "He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil" (1 John iii. 7, 8). "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments" (1 John v. 3). God loves righteousness and hates wickedness. Works inspired by faith and love are acceptable to God. "To do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Heb. xiii. 16.)

XXIV.

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

It is important that Christians form a right conception of the Christian Church, in order that they may have a standard with which to compare all unscriptural theories of the Church which may claim their acceptance. It is evidently the divine purpose that

those who have experienced the blessings of salvation, through faith in Christ, should be instrumental agents of the Holy Spirit in lifting up and saving the world. The institution of the Christian Church is the practical embodiment of this divine thought. But Christians are not to be isolated, independent workers. The Church is not an aggregation of discordant forces moving with lawless energy, without unity of purpose or method. Without organization and order there could be no provision for maintaining the means of grace, religious fellowship, Christian discipline, and aggressive evangelistic work in the world.

A local church has been fitly designated "a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure Word of God is preached and the sacraments are duly administered according to Christ's ordinance." This definition in its essential elements applies to a denomination embracing many congregations. All such Christian societies taken together constitute the visible Church. By the invisible Church is meant all those who are known to God as His saved children. In the New Testament the term "church" frequently means a local society; but the Church of which Christ is declared to be the Head is not any visible organization, but the whole body of true believers, wherever they may be or by whatever name they may be called. The Church should be governed by the teaching and principles of the New Testament; but no particular order or polity is enjoined in the Scriptures. A living Church will be largely moulded by its inner life, and should be free to adapt its methods and agencies to

the requirements of different countries and times. John Wesley's course practically illustrated his belief in this view of the Church.

The mission of the Church in the world is to conserve and proclaim the truths of the Gospel, to build up its members in faith and holiness, and to be the instrument of bringing a fallen and enslaved world back to God. The Church that is most successful in this work is the most apostolic and scriptural Church. The chief marks of a true Church are: fidelity to the faith once delivered to the saints, the experience of personal salvation by its members producing holy lives, and unselfish zeal in Christ's service. It is in these things the unity of the Church consists. Those who teach that a special ecclesiastical order is essential to a true Church have no support for such an assumption, either in the historic facts or teaching of the New Testament.

XXV.

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

Though fully recognizing "the priesthood of the people," in the sense that all Christians are to be workers in God's vineyard, we hold it to be clearly set forth in the New Testament that there is to be in the Church a class of persons, called of God, approved by the Church, and set apart to the functions of the

ministry. As Christianity was founded by a body of agents specially endowed and authenticated, there is strong ground to believe that the Church would not be left without recognized leaders and teachers to carry on the work begun. The duties assigned to the ministry imply that it constitutes a distinct order. They are to watch over the flock, to administer discipline in the congregation, and to proclaim the Gospel message of salvation. Though it is to be desired that 'all the Lord's people were prophets,' yet it is true, as Dr. Miley says, that "the functions of the ministry must ever constitute it a distinct class in the Christian Church." We find in the New Testament that there was in the early Church such an order of men. In the pastoral epistles their qualifications and duties are fully defined. If in the Old Testament dispensation men were called by God to the prophetic office, who were to warn and admonish the people and rebuke their wickedness, it is most reasonable to believe that the men who in the Christian dispensation are to be God's messengers of life and salvation to the world should be called by Him to the office and work of this ministry. Accordingly, we learn that it is God's prerogative to "send forth laborers into His harvest." "And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph. iv. 11). St. Paul said to the elders of Ephesus, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath

made you overseers" (Acts xx. 28). Ordination is the recognition and approval by the Church of those whom God has endowed and called to the ministry of the Gospel.

We repudiate and reject the dogma of "apostolical succession," which assumes that only ordination by a bishop, in the modern Episcopalian sense of the term, can make a Christian minister with authority to administer the sacraments; and that without such ordination there can be no true Church. There is no authority whatever for this notion in the Scriptures. The ordination of elders in the apostolic Church no more proves this dogma than ordination in the Methodist and Presbyterian churches proves that they hold it. It is out of harmony with the whole tenor of New Testament teaching, which places inward spiritual religion above all external rites and forms. This theory of the ministry exalts things human and formal above soundness in doctrine, the experience of the new birth, and godly consecrated lives, which are the true notes of a scriptural Church. The Master's test is, "By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. vii. 20). The belief of this theory also tends to promote a sectarian and exclusive spirit, utterly at variance with the catholic spirit of New Testament Christianity.

XXVI.

THE CHRISTIAN SACRAMENTS.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper are the only Sacraments which Christ instituted. They are "outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace." On the human side they are signs of faith in the grace and truth which they symbolize. On the divine side, as divinely instituted ordinances they are seals of God's promises to bestow these spiritual blessings. Baptism with water is the symbol of the moral purification wrought by the Holy Spirit in regeneration, and a confession of faith by the believing subject. In the Lord's Supper we commemorate the sacrificial death of Christ and avow our faith in His atonement. It has been deemed a remarkable thing that rites so simple, and intended to be a bond of unity among Christians, should have given rise to more controversies and wider divisions than any other subject. Into these controversies we have not space to enter here.

In view of the relations of Christianity to Judaism, and the purpose of these ordinances, it is hard to see how anyone who has no preconceived theory to support can deny that Baptism and the Lord's Supper correspond to Circumcision and the Passover, and take their places in the Christian dispensation. Baptism and circumcision are initiatory rites; the Lord's Supper and the Passover are memorial ordinances. Though the Sacraments are divine means of

receiving grace to those who use them in penitent faith, they are not necessarily effective by the mere performance, or the sole means of obtaining the blessings of which they are signs and seals. Neither does their efficiency as means of grace depend upon the intention of the administrator. The dogma that the elements of bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ, as well as the Lutheran theory of consubstantiation which assumes that they are present in the elements, is alike irrational and unscriptural.

Who are the proper subjects of baptism? Dr. W. B. Pope says: "All who profess faith in the doctrines of Christ, who are seeking salvation, whose lives do not contradict their profession or impeach their sincerity, may be accepted to baptism, and their children with them." Methodists "hold that all children, by virtue of the unconditional benefits of the Atonement, are members of the kingdom of God, and therefore graciously entitled to baptism." They also hold that effusion and sprinkling in the name of the Trinity, as well as dipping, are valid and proper Baptism. There are two errors respecting the Sacraments against which we should guard: First, the undervaluing and neglecting of these divinely-appointed means of grace; secondly, overestimating them, as if they were the sole channels of saving grace. Cornelius and his friends received the Holy Ghost before they were baptized. Paul thanked God that he had not baptized those whom he claimed as his spiritual children, which clearly implies that Baptism was not the means of their regeneration.

XXVII.

THE FUTURE STATE.

A future existence after death has been inferred from man's moral nature, the immateriality of the soul, and the unequal distribution of rewards and punishments in this life. This great truth is clearly revealed in the Scriptures. Like the existence of God, the future life is assumed, rather than asserted, in the Old Testament. In the New Testament statements revealing the life to come are numerous and explicit. Christ hath "brought life and immortality to light in the Gospel." The declarations of our Lord and the apostles on this subject are evidently not regarded as revealing a new truth. The Resurrection of the dead is taught in the Old Testament. In Daniel we read: "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan. xii. 2). St. Paul avowed before Felix that he had hope toward God "that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust" (Acts xxiv. 15). The Redeemer Himself says: "Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John v. 28, 29).

The question, "How are the dead raised, and with what body do they come?" is still a living question. We only know that, though the resurrection body

will be a spiritual body, the personal identity of everyone shall be preserved unbroken.

After the Resurrection comes the Final Judgment. What reason dimly forecasts the Bible fully reveals. The doctrine of a General Judgment, when Christ shall sit on His judgment throne and render unto every man according to his works, is placed beyond all question by the explicit statements of the Scriptures. Our Lord says: "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then He shall reward every man according to his works" (Matt. xvi. 27). We are not to understand by this that the judgment will be determined by the outward acts without regard to character; for we are told that God "shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ" (Rom. ii. 16). St. Paul declares that "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ" (2 Cor. v. 10). St. Peter says: "He commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is He which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead" (Acts x. 42). The sentences then pronounced shall be irrevocable and eternal. Those who have continued to do wickedly, and have rejected the salvation provided, shall be forever banished from the Divine Presence. The saved of the Lord shall inherit forever the blessedness prepared for them. The duration of the punishment of the wicked shall be coeval with that of the bliss of the righteous. The words of our Lord plainly affirm this: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal" (Matt. xxv. 46).